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BRINGING THE PROFESSION TOGETHER

1997 is an important year for the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, as it marks the fiftieth anniversary of its foundation. Although some have attempted to trace the germ of the idea for the establishment of the Institute to a speech delivered by the then Lord Chief Justice, Lord Russell of Killowen, in October 1895, it is to the deliberations of the Committee on Legal Education under Lord Atkin, which reported in July 1934, that we can most usefully look. The Committee called for the creation of ‘an institution which would be a headquarters for academic research and would promote the advancement of knowledge of the law in the most general terms’. It is of particular interest that the Committee also emphasised the importance of such an institution being a centre for those coming to Britain from overseas to conduct legal research, and that it should work closely with the professions.

To further research and foster collaboration between academia and the professions, something very dear to Lord Atkin and his colleagues, we have launched the Society for Advanced Legal Studies (SALS). It was an honour for the Institute to receive HRH The Princess Royal in June 1997, when she graciously unveiled stones commemorating the Institute’s jubilee and the foundation of the new society.

The primary objectives of SALS are to promote and facilitate legal research, through and with the support of the Institute, and in particular to foster co-operation and collaboration between scholars, practitioners and those involved in the administration of justice. SALS was incorporated as a company by guarantee following the winding up of the Friends of the Institute and a transfer of their undertaking to the new Society. Although the Friends have played a significant and much appreciated role in supporting the Institute, it was increasingly thought that the time had come for a more active and effective vehicle. The Society’s Council is chaired by Lord Steyn and an Executive Committee has already been appointed until the first AGM.

We are delighted to be able to report that SALS has already attracted strong support, not least from senior members of the judiciary and the professions.

Of considerable importance to the success of the Society and of great assistance to the Institute will be the new official journal of both organisations, *Amicus Curiae*. It is coincidental that we are launching this new journal on 29 October 1997 at the Middle Temple, and Lord Russell delivered his prophetic speech on 28 October 1895 in Lincoln’s Inn and surely this must augur well for both the Society and its journal.

We chose the name *Amicus Curiae* – friend of the court – to give emphasis to our desire to promote legal research and scholarship which is relevant to and supportive of the administration of justice. It is our view that academia has much to offer the practise of law, and practitioners certainly have much they could contribute to the advancement of scholarship. *Amicus Curiae* will, we are sure, become an important vehicle for raising and exploring issues, primarily of a topical nature, which can then be taken further by the Society and Institute.

The launch of *Amicus Curiae* is yet another step in the history of the Institute and one that we are confident both Lord Russell and Lord Atkin would applaud!